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ABSTRACT

This bulletin is one in a series of Further Education Unit publications on introducing General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) into the post-16 curriculum. It offers advice and guidance on coordinating and organizing a technical college response to the introduction of GNVQs. It is aimed at curriculum managers, GNVQ coordinators, and GNVQ program leaders. A section on planning for GNVQs addresses the following topics: setting local objectives, the student cohort, phasing in GNVQs, phasing out other qualifications, relationship to other qualifications, qualification introduction and replacement timetable, and choosing the GNVQ awarding body. The section on coordinating the GNVQ curriculum discusses responsibilities of the college coordinator, coordinating group, and program teams. Topics covered in the next section include marketing, college-school partnerships and collaboration, and progression arrangements. A section on managing the development of GNVQ programs examines the following: selection criteria, initial and diagnostic assessment, induction and orientation, learning program design, timetables, learning and assessment activities, additional studies and combinations, core skills, and assessment issues, including grading. The final section makes suggestions regarding monitoring and evaluating the introduction of GNVQs. A summary checklist for introducing GNVQs is appended. (YLB)

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ED 369 933

introducing GNVQs

planning, co-ordinating and managing the GNVQ curriculum

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INTRODUCTION

This bulletin, one in a series of FEU publications on introducing General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) into the post-16 curriculum, offers advice and guidance on co-ordinating and organising a college response to the introduction of GNVQs. It is aimed at college curriculum managers, GNVQ co-ordinators and GNVQ programme leaders and should be particularly useful for colleges planning the introduction, development or expansion of their GNVQ offer. A future FEU publication will address GNVQ programme teams and offer detailed advice on the design and delivery of learning programmes for GNVQs and their assessment.

Already GNVQs are available at Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced levels in:

- Art and Design
- Business
- Health and Social Care
- Leisure and Tourism
- Manufacturing

and at Intermediate and Advanced level in:

- Built Environment
- Hospitality and Catering
- Science

GNVQs in Distribution, Engineering, Information Technology, Land-Based Industries, Management, and Media and Communication are to be piloted from September 1994 and there are plans to develop GNVQs at higher levels (including post-graduate) and to make them available pre 16.

By and large the introduction of GNVQs into colleges has been a success and recruitment targets have been met with ease. Students find the programmes leading to the new qualifications attractive; universities and employers value the breadth of knowledge and understanding inherent in GNVQs; and colleges are pleased to have a high quality national alternative to A levels and NVQs.

However, colleges are still learning how to respond to some of the opportunities and challenges of the GNVQ model and still devising programmes for GNVQs and monitoring approaches to the implementation of the new qualification and its assessment systems.

Inevitably as GNVQs are introduced into the college curriculum, they will largely replace existing vocational qualifications but it will seldom be possible to simply phase out an old qualification and replace it with a GNVQ (or NVQ). There will not always be a direct correlation between the content and focus of the new and old qualifications.

As GNVQs are introduced colleges will have to re-consider the needs of some client groups and consider whether some modes of provision (e.g. part-time day release) can be sustained with the new qualifications. It is for these reasons that the introduction of GNVQs will result in some organisational and curriculum change, in turn requiring planning and co-ordination. Indeed some colleges have used the introduction to review the college's entire vocational curriculum while others have used it as a vehicle for institutional developments. This bulletin is intended to assist in these various processes.

Aidan Pettitt, Lead Development Officer (GNVQs)

THE CONTEXT

The development and introduction of GNVQs take place alongside a number of other curriculum initiatives. In particular, NVQs are still being developed and introduced into the vocational curriculum, the National Curriculum is the subject of reform, the core skills initiative has produced a set of national core skills (which are used with GNVQs) and work is continuing on the National Record of Achievement. These curriculum and qualification reforms are taking place while the Further Education Funding Councils (FEFCs) are putting in place new funding mechanisms for colleges and asking colleges to increase full-time participation rates. GNVQs will, then, be one of a number of initiatives and developments which need to be managed and synchronised by the college. For some colleges the introduction of GNVQs will be a fairly straightforward process. For others, and especially for those with limited experience of full-time vocational education, the introduction of GNVQs could require significant planning and support. For all colleges the introduction of GNVQs will present new opportunities for meeting local objectives or better meeting local needs as well as new challenges.

PLANNING FOR GNVQS

The single strongest message to emerge from the FEU's evaluation of the introduction of GNVQs into colleges was the need to plan, monitor and review the introduction and development of GNVQs at an institutional level. No matter what precise programme models are adopted for GNVQs, their introduction requires colleges to adopt a flexible cross-college approach to their implementation and to determine a set of local purposes, strategies and parameters within which learning and assessment systems are developed and resources allocated.

Setting local objectives for GNVQs

Rather then treat GNVQs as yet another initiative to be managed, some colleges have found that GNVQs can assist the college in better meeting some of its local objectives or can be used as a vehicle for reviewing or developing the vocational curriculum.

FEU found colleges which were using GNVQs to bring about an **increase in participation and achievement rates** by providing accreditation in vocational areas new to the college; offering vocational opportunities to new client groups, including non-employed adults; or providing national accreditation for college-designed programmes. Other colleges were using the introduction of GNVQs to **shift the balance between vocational and academic programmes** by replacing some academic provision, typically GCSE re-sit programmes, with GNVQs. Yet other colleges saw potential in the unit structure of GNVQs to **move towards more flexible and student focused delivery systems**. Some were exploiting the **credit accumulation** potential of GNVQs or re-visiting modular approaches to delivery including approaches which harmonise A-level and GNVQ programmes and give students access to NVQ units within their programme. A number of colleges embraced GNVQs as a means of accelerating the development of a **core skill entitlement** for all students on GNVQ, NVQ, A-level or other programmes.

GNVQs and the student cohort

Most colleges have targeted those for whom the qualifications were designed -young people aged 16-19 who wish to study full time -but there are no age restrictions on who may achieve GNVQs. Indeed, interest has already been shown in opening up access to GNVQs to adults, people in employment and students aged between 14 and 16.

Although most colleges expect most of the GNVQ cohort to be aged 16-19 and engaged in full-time study, colleges should define their target cohort. Will adults be recruited to GNVQ programmes? Will individuals in employment be offered GNVQs?

The choice of target group may be informed by local objectives for the GNVQs. Colleges aiming to use GNVQs to increase participation will want to target GNVQs at those who have not been attracted to the college in the past, whether they are 16-19 year-olds, non-employed individuals or older, and perhaps employed, students.

In turn, decisions about target groups will have implications for the way in which the qualifications are introduced into the curriculum and the ways in which GNVQ programmes are organised and offered to students.

> *Some centres have deliberately recruited older students to GNVQs by offering local TEC-funded programmes designed specifically for unemployed adults. In one centre, students achieved a full Advanced GNVQ within four terms as opposed to the six terms required by most Advanced GNVQ students. Important issues of selection, work placement and TEC funding have had to be dealt with.*

If colleges expect to offer GNVQs to those in employment then they need to devise programmes accessible to those in employment and, perhaps, consider how these programmes might be more sharply focused.

Phasing in GNVQs

Although the speed at which colleges can reform their vocational curriculum depends partly on the national availability of the new qualifications, colleges have some discretion over the timescale and sequence in which GNVQs are introduced into the curriculum.

Colleges can phase GNVQs into their curriculum:

- as soon as they become generally available;
- sector by sector;
- level by level;

or wait until all GNVQs are available and introduce them all together.

In reaching decisions about phasing in GNVQs, colleges should consider the merits of piloting GNVQs; any similarities between GNVQs and older vocational qualifications; and the needs of the first GNVQ student cohort.

The advantages of piloting the new qualifications as soon as they become available include the possibility of attracting development funding and helping to influence national developments. The disadvantages include the provisional nature of the qualification and the lack of any national experience on which to draw.

Some GNVQs cover much the same content as the qualifications they might replace, others differ quite markedly from older qualifications with similar titles.

> *The FEU evaluation found that GNVQs in Business cover much the same content, with roughly the same degree of specialism, as older vocational qualifications in Business and/or Business and Finance. The GNVQs in Art and Design, however, can replace existing general Art and Design provision but are not suitable for replacing the more specialised Art and Design qualifications. Similarly, the content and scope of the GNVQs in Health and Social Care are not the same as older qualifications in Social, Child or Health Care although the GNVQs may provide a general foundation for more specialised study. Nor do the GNVQs in Leisure and Tourism correspond to pre-GNVQ qualifications in Recreation, Travel, Tourism or Leisure Studies. The GNVQs in Manufacturing have no real existing equivalents.*

Many colleges have taken a differential approach to each GNVQ, reflecting the degree to which each relates to the qualification it might replace.

FEU found that the introduction of GNVQs in Business and Art and Design was often favoured ahead of the introduction of GNVQs in Manufacturing and Health and Social Care, because the former are closer to the old qualifications than the latter. A smaller number of colleges, on the other hand, said they had chosen to prioritise the introduction of the GNVQs which were most different to pre-GNVQ qualifications.

Decisions about phasing in GNVQs by level require consideration of the progression needs of the first cohort of GNVQ students. The advantages of introducing the lower GNVQ levels first so that the college's GNVQ offer is developed from the first level upwards as students progress through the levels needs to be weighed against the advantages of introducing the higher level GNVQs first and establishing the progression route to university as a priority.

Phasing out other qualifications

Unless the college is intending to offer GNVQs only in those sectors in which it has not previously offered a qualification, e.g. Manufacturing, it will eventually, if not immediately, have to phase out qualifications as GNVQs are phased in.

Phasing out qualifications requires as much planning as phasing in because not all existing broad vocational qualifications, such as BTEC First and National Diplomas and the C&G Diploma in Vocational Education (DVE), can be replaced directly by a GNVQ with a similar title and purpose.

Where GNVQs are similar to older vocational qualifications, e.g. the BTEC National Diploma in Business and Finance and the Advanced GNVQ in Business, decisions about when to abandon the older vocational qualification completely in favour of the new will have to be taken.

Where the qualification to be replaced is very different from the GNVQs, the replacement may be framed by a policy decision. Colleges have reported that some students prefer GNVQs to GCSEs and A levels and so the introduction of GNVQs has had an impact on the non-vocational part of the college's curriculum.

A number of colleges reported that they had taken a college decision to restrict places on GCSE resit programmes severely in favour of places on GNVQ programmes. They believed that this was in the best interests of the students and would enable the college to increase local participation and achievement rates. Other colleges cited the desire for a vocational alternative to A levels as a major reason for offering some of the GNVQs.

More difficult decisions concern those more specialist variants which cannot be easily replaced by GNVQs. Some specialisation of GNVQs is possible through the choice of optional and additional units and by combining them with other qualifications (whether they are A levels or NVQs) but the degree of specialisation is less than with some of the more traditional vocational qualifications.

Some colleges have been reluctant to replace their more specialised vocational qualifications, e.g. in Child Care or Photography, with GNVQs until the new qualifications were able to reflect the specialisms of the older qualifications. Nor have these colleges been convinced that the development of NVQs would solve this dilemma, suggesting that NVQs may be too narrow, occupationally specific and unsuitable for entry to higher education. Other colleges have suggested that the development of GNVQs reflects a need to move away from specialist vocational provision towards providing students with a broad vocational foundation underpinning a number of vocations. This view is more common amongst staff involved in Intermediate GNVQs and in some vocational sectors such as business education.

The issue of specialisation is often raised in connection with part-time routes to vocational qualifications for those in employment. Of course, if the college is to offer GNVQs primarily to students aged 16-19 and through full-time programmes then the introduction

of GNVQs might not have an impact on the college's existing part-time vocational qualification offer.

> *Some colleges have developed part-time routes to GNVQs for those in employment but these routes do demand significant support for the student from the employer. Other colleges have discovered that some, usually more mature students, could be expected to achieve a GNVQ in a shorter period of time than students aged between 16 and 19. However other colleges have expressed scepticism over the suitability of GNVQs as a replacement for specialist part time vocational qualifications pointing out that GNVQs are designed to take over twice as long to achieve as BTEC certificates. In these cases colleges have had to consider the needs of the cohort for this type of provision and the best ways in which their needs could continue to be met.*

Colleges also found that it was necessary to give careful consideration to the comparative levels of achievement demanded by GNVQs and any qualifications they may replace.

> *A number of colleges found that Intermediate GNVQs seemed to be more demanding and have a greater skills and knowledge base than many of the qualifications Intermediate GNVQs could be expected to replace. As a result, some colleges reported that they were planning to replace these older vocational qualifications with GNVQs at Intermediate* and *Foundation. Only by offering GNVQs at both levels did the colleges believe that the needs of the entire cohort which had been recruited to the older qualifications, could be satisfied.*

GNVQs and other qualifications

Colleges have found it useful to plan the introduction of GNVQs alongside the introduction of other new vocational qualifications, such as NVQs.

> *One college planned the introduction of GNVQs in Health and Social Care in the college after taking into account the likely impact of the development of GNVQs and NVQs in these sectors. The college guessed that within a few years the only vocational qualifications in health, social and childcare offered on a full-time basis by the college would be GNVQs with college involvement in NVQs in these sectors featuring only where employers were heavily involved in training and assessing their own trainees and approached the college for some assistance. These assumptions led the college to plan for a significant restructuring of its curriculum offer in these sectors and to expect changes to the profile of the student cohort on college programmes in these sectors. It also decided to investigate the possibility of developing new services for employers, to make some departmental reorganisation (as a result of combining Health and Social Care in one qualification) and to consider some staff redeployment.*

Other colleges have emphasised the work relatedness of GNVQs and offered them as an alternative to NVQs.

> *Some colleges introduced GNVQs in vocational sectors where NVQ staff experience was particularly well developed. Others saw GNVQs as a natural replacement for the college's full-time NVQ programmes or as a means of providing a full-time vocational route to employment where occupational competence might be developed and NVQs achieved.*

Qualification introduction and replacement timetable

Whatever the local purpose for, and pattern of, the introduction of GNVQs, colleges involved in the first phase of GNVQ implementation found that it was useful to agree a whole-college timetable for their introduction into the curriculum.

These timetables detailed the availability of GNVQs (and perhaps NVQs where appropriate) and the dates the college had set for the introduction of new qualifications and the abandonment of the old. They were informed both by the availability of the new qualifications and local factors such as the likely demand for the new qualifications and the capacity of the college to accommodate the changes needed for the introduction of new qualifications.

Choosing the GNVQ awarding body

Since all three major vocational awarding bodies now offer all GNVQ titles at all levels and the mandatory vocational and core skill units do not differ between awarding bodies, a college could register with one awarding body only. There are some administrative advantages to doing this.

Awarding bodies are free, however, to devise their own optional and additional units. Indeed, the optional and additional units offered by the different awarding bodies might differ significantly. Some colleges have registered with two or more awarding bodies so that in some sectors, and often in Health and Social Care, the student has a wider range of optional and additional units to choose from. The student who wishes to specialise in one branch of Health and Social Care, for example, may find the optional and additional units offered by one awarding body more appropriate and relevant than those offered by another.

Awarding bodies also differ in terms of registration fees and administrative arrangements. For example, the fees for GNVQs in the 1993-4 year varied as shown:

Advanced fees

Awarding body	Fee
BTEC	£67.00
City and Guilds	£65.00 (registration £29, plus £4.50 per mandatory unit [x8])
RSA Examinations Board	£50.50 (registration £7 plus £2.10 per unit [x15] and £1.50 per unit test [x8])

City and Guilds also charges £100 for centre approval visits.

Intermediate fees

Awarding body	Fee
BTEC	£53.00
City and Guilds	£47.00 (registration £29, plus £4.50 per mandatory unit [x4])
RSA Examinations Board	£38.20 (registration £7 plus £2.80 per unit [x9] and £1.50 per unit test [x4])

Registration fees shown for GNVQs include a levy of £6.00 imposed by NCVQ which will increase to £10.00 over the next two years.

The criteria used by awarding bodies in approving colleges as GNVQ centres also differ as do their experience of NVQs or higher level qualifications and the advice and guidance they offer to centres. Colleges should consider all these factors when deciding with which awarding body, or bodies, to register.

Some aspects of the introduction of GNVQs into the college curriculum, such as introducing them into several vocational sectors, are best co-ordinated centrally. These aspects include cross-college decisions on curriculum entitlements, student activities common to all GNVQ programmes (for example induction), college activities common to all programmes (perhaps marketing) and college relationships with other organisations such as schools and universities.

The college GNVQ co-ordinator

Because the organisation and co-ordination of GNVQs are key tasks for colleges, many have chosen to identify a senior member of staff as the GNVQ co-ordinator.

The GNVQ co-ordinator will need strong links with the college management team and with college staff responsible for overseeing GNVQ assessment and verification. They will also need significant time to carry out their duties.

A typical GNVQ Co-ordinator might be responsible for:

- *identifying and delivering staff training and awareness-raising needs (with other relevant college staff);*
- *advising college management on the college GNVQ introduction timetable;*
- *identifying and advising college management on whole-college curriculum, institutional and resourcing issues;*
- *advising GNVQ delivery teams on curriculum models, materials and teaching and learning strategies*
- *developing appropriate GNVQ access and progression strategies and agreements;*
- *maintaining and co-ordinating any GNVQ partnerships and collaborations;*
- *liaising with external organisations over GNVQs;*
- *assisting in GNVQ marketing strategies;*
- *monitoring and evaluating the introduction of GNVQs into the curriculum.*

The GNVQ co-ordinating group

In addition to appointing a GNVQ co-ordinator, many colleges have established a GNVQ co-ordinating or steering group. Sometimes these groups are 'short-life' working groups, sometimes inter-departmental groups and sometimes subgroups of the college's senior management team.

Often the key purpose of the group develops as the college's GNVQ offer developed. Before the introduction of GNVQs, the group is concerned mainly with planning. This turns to co-ordination as the GNVQs are introduced and to monitoring and evaluation as GNVQs became established in different parts of the college.

Membership of a typical college GNVQ Group might include the GNVQ co-ordinator and GNVQ assessment co-ordinator (where this post exists) and around ten individuals selected from:

- senior college curriculum manager (often as chair);
- senior staff from sections involved with GNVQs;
- staff development officer;
- core skills co-ordinator;

- other members drawn from:

  TECs;
  local HE institutions;
  employers;
  college governors;
  Careers Service;
  local schools;
  TVE staff, etc.

The responsibilities of a GNVQ group can include advising on:

- establishing a timetable for the introduction of GNVQs;
- identifying curriculum and staff development needs associated with the introduction of GNVQs;
- establishing and maintaining internal quality assurance systems for GNVQ programmes;
- steering any cross-college development work;
- steering the establishment of partnerships and collaborations, including progression agreements;
- establishing and developing a marketing strategy for GNVQs;
- co-ordinating the introduction of GNVQs across the college.

Programme teams

The introduction of GNVQs will often require colleges to review the functions and composition of programme, or course, teams.

The introduction of GNVQs often builds on considerable college experience of offering vocational qualifications but no matter what qualification the GNVQ might replace, GNVQ teams face a new set of problems and demands. New approaches will be needed to:

- the design of learning and assessment materials and assignments;
- the development and assessment of core skills;
- assessment, recording and grading techniques;
- tutoring, action planning and learning support.

This review of functions often has implications for staff timetables.

The composition of GNVQ teams may also require review either because the focus of the GNVQ will be new to the colleges (for example Manufacturing) or because old divisions are broken down by the new qualifications (for instance by combining Health with Care and Social Care for the GNVQ in Health and Social Care), or because of the requirements for core skill delivery and assessment.

Specialist staff may be needed for core skills, one college commented:

> *We found that there was a real need for specialist core skill staff to join course (programme) teams and play a far greater role in programme design and assessment than before. This was especially the case with Numeracy which seems to demand teachers with some experience of teaching Maths and even more so where Numeracy does not always come naturally to the (GNVQ) subject, like Health and Social Care.*

Although GNVQs are far less vocationally focused or occupationally specific than some older vocational qualifications and NVQs, they are still best taught by staff with some

experience of the vocational sector. Colleges suggest that it is not essential that all staff should have worked in a relevant industry but it is necessary for staff to have up-to-date knowledge of the relevant industries. Some colleges may have to consider how staff can be acquire this knowledge and be kept updated.

Colleges also report that it is sometimes necessary to draw new distinctions between tutors and assessors. Although all members of the programme team might teach, not all will assess. This can be especially the case where part-time tutors are important, and perhaps specialist, contributors to the teaching and learning programmes but, for a variety of reasons, are not assessors. Where this distinction occurs, the programme team is critical in ensuring that teaching and assessment are complementary and that tutors and assessors communicate and plan activities together.

The GNVQ programme team will also be the primary curriculum and staff development vehicle for GNVQs in the first few years of their introduction, especially in relation to agreeing standards and applying assessment and grading criteria. In the first year of GNVQ implementation, colleges tended to acknowledge this by allocating some abatement or remission to staff for programme development, additional team meetings and/or specialist non-teaching duties.

NCVQ, the awarding bodies and government departments have all produced information on GNVQs and they have attracted significant coverage in the education press.

Marketing

Many college activities undertaken for other purposes will contribute to marketing; for example, discussions with universities about progression and organising work placements for GNVQ students result in university staff and employers learning about GNVQs. However colleges report that general knowledge of the new qualification is still low.

Colleges involved in the first year of GNVQ implementation suggest that marketing of GNVQs needs to be viewed as a dedicated activity in order to:

- **raise awareness of the qualification as an alternative to GCSE resits and A levels amongst school leavers, their parents, teachers and careers advisers;**
- **attract new and potential student groups — for example adult returners;**
- **assist in establishing progression routes to GNVQs from schools and from GNVQs to employment and HE.**

Colleges have employed a variety of marketing methods including:

- **the establishment of GNVQ advisory groups with a membership drawn from employers, HE staff, the careers service, local schools and TECs;**
- **advertisements in local papers, qualification information sheets and information distributed to local schools and careers officers;**
- **open days and conferences;**
- **visits to organisations which are likely to come into contact with prospective GNVQ students or graduates.**

The local TEC can be a particularly useful partner in marketing GNVQs. TECs have been able to offer colleges introductions to events and organisations and the local **education strategic planning forum** can be used to establish some local marketing strategies.

Finding out what the customer wants, and where, pays dividends.

> *One college, noting that there were far fewer applications for the GNVQs in Manufacturing than for the others, discovered that a local employer wanted a training programme that developed core skills and was focused on the manufacturing sector but which did not jettison broad knowledge and understanding in favour of occupational competence. The college was able to interest the employer in the Manufacturing GNVQs and there are now plans for the employer to use the college as a training provider.*

Colleges found that when producing marketing information it was often essential to include details on:

- **the equivalences of GNVQs with other qualifications;**
- **the differences between GNVQs and NVQs, GCSEs and A levels;**
- **the content of all the core skills which can be developed through GNVQ programmes (i.e.: not just the mandatory core skills);**
- **the kinds of activities GNVQ students would experience;**
- **the structure and content of the qualification.**

Whatever the approach colleges agreed that there were major advantages in good quality product, written in user-friendly language.

College-school partnerships and collaboration

Several colleges in the first phase of GNVQ implementation entered into some form of collaborative partnership with schools or other colleges. These were sometimes built on TVE or awarding body consortia, sometimes established with the introduction of GNVQs.

Partnerships can be established and maintained for a variety of reasons:

- **Schools and colleges might collaborate where one partner has little experience of offering vocational qualifications. This kind of partnership can enable the less experienced partner to offer GNVQs under the auspices of the more experienced partner or can exist to share the delivery of GNVQ programmes.**

  Colleges from the first phase of GNVQs pointed out that in the latter case it is important to remember that assessment of students must take place by recognised assessors under appropriate conditions. Although students can be taught in two different institutions, the quality of assessment is better guaranteed if they are assessed at only one. Similarly, any disaggregation of the learning programme should be warily approached, e.g. programmes which divorce delivery of core skills from vocational units should be avoided.

- **Local collaboration can take place for joint training and development activities, typically staff development and material writing activities.**

  FEU found one college in an assignment and material production partnership with a number of schools through the local TVE partnership. Another college was using an old LEA/CPVE consortium as a means of collaborating on assessor and verifier training.

- **Some schools and colleges are exploring agreements on recruitment and progression. Typically, the partners agree between themselves which institution will offer which GNVQ title at which level.**

  One college had entered a partnership with 12 schools in connection with GNVQs. They all recognised that delivering every GNVQ in every centre in a locality was unnecessary and could result in too few students for a particular GNVQ in any centre. They agreed to ensure that every GNVQ was available somewhere but also to ensure viable class sizes. Some centres relinquished recruitment to certain GNVQ titles to other centres and agreements were reached on which centres would offer Foundation and Intermediate GNVQs, which Intermediate and Advanced, and which Advanced only. This also meant that less experienced centres could concentrate on a few GNVQs and more experienced centres could make maximum use of their expertise. Issues of travel, management, quality, costs and common timetables had also to be addressed.

Progression arrangements

GNVQs were designed to be acceptable to HE and many students expect to progress to university after their GNVQ programme. Nationally, the Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) is working with NCVQ and others on the GATE (GNVQ Access to Higher Education) project to ensure that GNVQ graduates can progress to HE without prejudice. General response has been encouraging.

In a recent survey for GATE, many universities were accepting either Advanced GNVQs or two GCE A levels as basic entry criteria although, as with A-level applicants, basic entry standards may not be enough for a place on some degree programmes. Similarly, a range of additional studies was acceptable to many although where a specific A level was required for entry, the GNVQ student would need this as well as the Advanced GNVQ. About 30 universities are guaranteeing interviews to GNVQ applicants this year and another 40, or so, are advising admission tutors to interview applicants with GNVQs for some or all GNVQ titles.

Despite these national developments it is clear that work on progression is needed at a local level. Colleges have found that university staff, especially admissions tutors, need briefing on new qualifications and discussion of progression routes from GNVQs with

local universities. This needs to happen as GNVQs are being implemented, if university admissions staff are to be be conversant with GNVQs in time for the first applications from GNVQ graduates and if GNVQ students are to get good advice on combinations of units and additional studies for progression to specific university programmes.

Many colleges in phase one offered **information and updating sessions to local universities** as a means of marketing the college, its students and GNVQs and as a means of establishing and developing progression agreements with the institution.

> *Some colleges found that GNVQ specifications are not always understood or adequate, on their own, as a description of the GNVQ programme. One college said, 'When providing information to admissions tutors, remember that answers to some questions can be quite complex and the presenter will need to be well prepared. For example, the answer to: "How much Maths is there in this GNVQ?" might require reference to the core skill units at a more than one level, additional units in Maths, the content of the specification and additional studies (e.g. a GCSE may be offered alongside the GNVQ).'*
>
> *Another college warned against explaining GNVQs solely in terms of GCSEs and A levels. An Advanced GNVQ (level 3) is more than two A levels when extended by three core skills units and possibly another two core skills units and another six additional units.*

Colleges also found that universities may want more information on the student than that provided by the GNVQ and **it is not uncommon for higher education to ask for some differentiation in the vocational skills nor for HE institutions to suggest that students ought to add to their GNVQ**. Precise requirements may vary between GNVQ sectors.

Most colleges agree that the establishment of a college-university progression arrangement at corporate or institutional level is a priority. They also acknowledge that GNVQ course team members need to meet HE admissions tutor(s) at a programme level to agree the details of any progression agreement as it affects different GNVQs.

Generally, existing progression agreements have included:

- when applications to the HE institution will be expected;
- who will interview applicants and interrogate portfolios;
- where interview will take place (at the GNVQ centre and/or the HE institution);
- what the student will be expected to take to any interview;
- any post-interview arrangements;
- how the progression agreement will be monitored and managed. A number of colleges have established HE/FE advisory groups to carry out these functions.

In some cases regional progression agreements have been established involving several schools, colleges and perhaps more than one university. These agreements take account of the need to consider progression routes from school to GNVQs and through GNVQ levels as well as from Advanced GNVQs to higher education.

> *In one area, a number of schools and colleges entered into a partnership with each other and with HE institutions to establish progression agreements — from school to college for students aged 16-18 and from school or college to HE for students aged 18 and over.*

Of course GNVQs have been designed as much as a progression route into employment as a route to HE. Colleges have thus found that local marketing to employers is needed to place GNVQs within the NVQ framework as well as differentiate them from NVQs and A levels. GNVQs can also help revitalise Education-Business Partnerships and ensure that TVE gains are embedded in mainstream vocational programmes and qualifications. Colleges have offered employers briefing events, often under the auspices of the local TEC, and have invited employer representatives onto GNVQ advisory groups.

Ultimately the learning programmes deployed for particular GNVQs will be informed by a variety of factors. Some of these factors are extraneous to the institution (the timing and availability of external tests, for instance); some will be determined by individual programme teams (for example, the best way to teach students how to 'produce production plans for products' -element 2.2 of the Intermediate GNVQ in Manufacturing), and some will be negotiated with individual students (perhaps when a student is ready for assessment) but there will also be some factors which derive from a whole-college response to GNVQs. They are likely to include college decisions on selection criteria and induction programmes, the construction and resourcing of learning programmes and any college assessment policy as it affects GNVQs.

Selection

No formal entry requirements were set for GNVQ programmes when the qualifications were designed. However, colleges will want to make sure that the students recruited have a reasonable chance of achieving both the core skills and the vocational components of the qualification.

There are clear advantages in colleges setting some minimum level of achievement for entry to GNVQ programmes.

They will need to take into account the degree to which learning support services might allow students with only modest achievements to be supported through a GNVQ programme.

> *FEU found that although some colleges were using GCSE grades to select students for GNVQ programmes there was much agreement that GCSE grades were unlikely to be an accurate predictor of student success on GNVQ programmes. Some colleges were beginning to determine the threshold vocational and core skills, abilities and achievements needed for entry onto a GNVQ programme and were identifying ways in which applicants might demonstrate those abilities and aptitudes. This was achieved by core skill and vocational staff meeting together to agree the minimum requirements. Applicants could demonstrate that they had met the requirements by reference to Records of Achievement, portfolios, qualifications (including GCSEs, NVQs and traditional vocational qualifications) and initial assessment.*

Initial and diagnostic assessment

Whether or not colleges establish a minimum threshold of achievement for entry to GNVQ programmes, they may wish to make some central decisions over the form and purpose of initial and diagnostic assessment.

Colleges can use diagnostic testing to identify:

- **core skill achievements and learning needs;**
- **vocational skill achievements and learning needs;**
- **opportunities for accreditation;**
- **which level is most appropriate for a student;**
- **the appropriate vocational title for the student;**
- **other learning support needs.**

Whatever the precise purposes of diagnostic assessment, colleges are advised to consider the implications of information provided by it.

One college offered communication and numeracy diagnostic tests to all GNVQ recruits before allocating them to Intermediate or Advanced GNVQs and making final decisions on the composition of individual student GNVQ programmes. The college discovered that it had over-estimated the average level of achievement in communication and numeracy and, as a consequence, had to reallocate time and staff away from the vocational component of the GNVQs to the core skills. The information generated by diagnostic testing also indicated that the proportion of the cohort gaining Advanced GNVQs was likely to be smaller than envisaged before recruitment. This had implications for the college in terms of staffing, timetabling, the establishment of progression routes from GNVQs and expectations about the proportion of the cohort likely to stay on at the college once the current GNVQ programmes had finished. These findings also had implications for funding and underlined the value to the college, as well as to students, of diagnostic assessment.

It is unlikely that many individuals will be recruited onto GNVQ programmes with past experience which can be accredited towards a GNVQ vocational unit. However, if a student seems to have met all the necessary criteria and range requirements for a unit, they can be fast tracked to assessment, which could involve entering them for an external test. Students with evidence from the past which satisfies the requirements for core skill achievement can submit that evidence through their portfolio and have it used in accrediting core skills. Colleges should note that although there are links and overlaps between core skills and the National Curriculum, no credit transfer system yet exists between GCSEs and GNVQs.

Induction and orientation

The introduction of GNVQs is leading many colleges to review their induction and orientation programmes. FEU found colleges which had decided, as a matter of policy, to encourage students to defer making decisions about level, additional studies and choice of vocational title/sector until after an extended induction programme. In some cases students were able to defer their choice of qualification route (GCSEs/A levels, GNVQs or NVQs) until the end of the induction programme.

Induction programmes had often been designed to provide a common cross-college foundation to a number of qualifications and included vocational tasting. They varied in length from a few weeks to a full term.

The most effective induction programmes enabled students to develop the skills necessary to take responsibility for their own learning and used information generated through diagnostic assessment to determine learner support needs as well as choice of GNVQ, additional studies and level.

Learning programme design

There are no formal restrictions on how GNVQ learning programmes are organised so colleges have some freedom to design appropriate learning programmes for individual students or specific groups of students. In practice this freedom is curtailed by awarding body requirements on such things as student registrations, FEFC funding regimes and college resource considerations. In any case most students on GNVQ programmes will wish to attend college on a full-time basis for one or two years.

Most colleges have made some central decisions about the design of GNVQ learning programmes. Some have decided to use a common model across the college, independent of awarding body or vocational sector; others have deliberately chosen to use and evaluate a number of models before coming to any conclusions. It is not unusual for colleges to use different models for different GNVQs.

In reaching decisions about GNVQ learning programmes colleges have taken the following factors into account:

- The need to differentiate between **learning programmes** and **assessment systems**. Colleges have tried to avoid programme models dictated solely by assessment requirements while ensuring some synchronisation of the teaching and learning required for a unit with the assessment and testing requirements of that unit.

- The need to strike a balance between the advantages of coherence and integration (and integration is expected as far as core skill development and assessment are concerned), and the advantages of the credit accumulation potential of GNVQs.

- The opportunity to construct programmes which can accept students at a number of points during the year.

- The staffing needs of any model. Some models may require specialist staff only at particular points in the programme or for particular units.

- The attraction of the model for students and their changing needs as they progress through a programme. Some students may not find very linear delivery models particularly motivating and students in the last term of a programme may have very different needs to those at entry.

- The demands of external tests including their availability and any desire to spread external testing throughout the year and leave some opportunity for students to re-sit the tests.

Possible learning programme models can vary from the single unit model to the totally integrated learning programme. Colleges report that some differences in programme design are linked to the sectors. For example, FEU found moves towards greater integration more likely in Art and Design and a tendency towards single unit delivery was stronger in Health and Social Care.

The single unit model

In this model, each GNVQ unit, with the exception of the core skill units, is taught and assessed separately and alone.. Units are usually attempted consecutively although some may be timetabled concurrently. If the former, external tests take place at set points during the learning programme: if the latter, external tests take place at the end of the programme. The single unit model seems to be more appropriate for some GNVQs than others. Even where the single unit model was used it was unusual to find units delivered in the sequence in which they appeared in the GNVQ specification.

The fully integrated model

In practice, a programme in which all units are integrated is not possible for most colleges. It would be difficult to accommodate separate and individual external tests within a fully unified programme and to identify opportunities for assessment. The demands on tracking progress and recording achievement would also be enormous. Most importantly, though, a fully unified programme would be unlikely to be attractive to many students who wish to accumulate units during the learning programme.

The partially integrated model

A popular choice of programme model for GNVQs in the first year of GNVQ implementation, fell somewhere between total integration and single unit learning and delivery; allowed partial integration and some credit accumulation.

This was achieved by breaking the teaching and learning year into a number of 'blocks' or phases, defined in weeks. Units of the GNVQ were allocated to each block so that units were integrated within the blocks but accredited at the end of the block. This allowed for some credit accumulation alongside some integration. The learning activities undertaken in each block underpinned one or more units and the choice of units for each block was informed by the ease with which integration of learning might take place. Core skill achievement took place alongside the achievement of the vocational units and through integration of learning, if at all possible. Additional time was often allocated, outside the blocks, to core skill development and/or additional studies and/or units.

Blocks at the beginning of the programme often focused on mandatory units with those towards the end of the programme dealing with optional units and additional studies. Assessment and testing opportunities appeared at the end of each block as did action planning and review. Some colleges allocated a week between blocks for these activities. Others allocated a number of weeks to induction before the first block and/or between blocks if access to the programme was possible at the beginning of any block. There were two basic variants on this approach:

- In some colleges a year is divided into three blocks, of about ten weeks, each focusing on two GNVQ vocational units so that some coherence (whether reflected in integration or not) is present.
- In other colleges the year is divided into two blocks of 15-18 weeks and three units are similarly allocated to each block.

GNVQ timetables

Despite the absence of restrictions on the number of resourced hours which can be dedicated to a GNVQ programme, colleges have to allocate resources and teaching time to GNVQ programmes. Ultimately the amount of time will be constrained by funding issues.

The FEFC has now indicated that the 12 vocational units and three mandatory core skill units of an Advanced GNVQ will attract the same number of basic on-programme funding units as a BTEC National or three A levels. An Intermediate GNVQ will similarly attract the same number of basic on-programme funding units as a BTEC First Diploma or five GCSEs. Additional GNVQ units, or additional studies, will attract additional funding.

The FEFC decisions are consistent with the experience of the centres involved in the first year of GNVQ implementation. They found that although the precise number of hours varied according to the needs of the student cohort, the type of learning experience and the requirements of the subject matter, with some GNVQs demanding far more 'workshop-based learning' than 'classroom-based learning', between 15 and 20 study hours per week are needed for a GNVQ programme.

Typically, colleges allocated between 55 and 70 hours teaching time to a vocational unit. Put another way, between ten and 14 teaching hours per week for the vocational units of a GNVQ (assuming six vocational units are attempted per year) was typical. In addition another five hours per week might be allocated to learning support for the mandatory core skills (with IT and Application of Number taking a greater proportion) and two hours per week for action planning, tutorials and other learning support.

Some colleges have used the introduction of GNVQs to move further towards a common college GNVQ timetable. If weekly timetables are constructed so that mandatory units are always offered on certain days of the week, learner support on another, work experience on another and additional units on another, flexibility of learning programmes can be enhanced.

A possible college timetable for a typical GNVQ programme:

Day	Morning	Afternoon
Monday	*Additional Units*	*Additional Units or Core Skills*
Tuesday	*Vocational Unit A*	*Vocational Unit X*
Wednesday	*Additional Units or Core Skills*	*Planning/Review*
Thursday	*Vocational Unit X*	*Vocational Unit A*
Friday	*Work Experience*	*Work Experience*

In this example, students attend for a minimum of seven sessions per week (each three hours long except the planning and review session which is two hours) so that they attend all the sessions for vocational units, one session of core skills support and one session of work experience and the action planning and review session. This totals 17 hours teacher contact. In addition, students may attend one or two sessions of additional units (which includes additional studies such as GCSEs). Additional units and studies are timetabled so that students following programmes of learning leading to GNVQs in different vocational sectors come together for certain choices of study. The vocational units are timetabled for ten weeks at which point they are replaced by two other vocational units.

Learning and assessment activities

The organisation and design of a range of learning and assessment activities for GNVQs is primarily the duty of the programme team including those with responsibility for core skill development and assessment. However, colleges may wish to issue some general guidelines to all GNVQ teams on learning and assessment activities.

Activities can include workshop or classroom exercises or tasks, projects, assignments or work placements. Some activities will be designed primarily to structure learning (for example those used at the beginning of the programme), others might be designed primarily to generate evidence of achievement (in particular those used towards the end of a unit and/or programme) and some might structure learning and generate evidence of assessment. A number of ground rules can be identified:

- **the primary purpose of any activity should be clear;**
- **the possibility that even those activities designed primarily to structure learning and used at the beginning of a programme might generate evidence of achievement should not be ignored;**
- **activities designed primarily for assessment should be clearly related to the elements and performance criteria of the GNVQ;**
- **how activities might assist with the development and assessment of core skills should always be considered;**
- **how activities might produce evidence of achievement which meets the grading criteria should always be considered.**

Many colleges have been keen to involve local employers in the design of assignments or work-based projects for students in the workplace. In some cases employers have advised on activities (perhaps through membership of the GNVQ co-ordinating group or the establishment of sector-specific GNVQ advisory groups), in others they have been able to provide materials or examples of practice in employment.

One college invited the manager of the local leisure centre into the college to advise students on planning a set of activities for school-age children which might take place in a leisure centre over a half-term holiday. When the planning had been completed, the students carried out the activities in the leisure centre during the local schools' half term.

Although work experience is not a requirement of GNVQ programmes colleges report that some GNVQ units do need to be underpinned by work experience. Other colleges have made work experience placements a key part of their GNVQ programmes.

One college offered a three-week work placement as part of every GNVQ programme and used them to generate evidence of achievement for both the GNVQ vocational and core skills units and the NVQ units offered as additional studies.

Additional studies and combinations

Programmes for some students will concentrate on the GNVQ alone. For others, their programmes will include additional studies of some sort.

Specific additional units or studies might be required for particular progression routes out of the GNVQ programme or to focus the student's programme. Many students, though, may wish simply to broaden their programme or make it more demanding. For these reasons, most colleges involved with GNVQs have tended to identify a range of additional studies available to any GNVQ student and then make available more specialised additional studies to students following a programme to a particular GNVQ.

Some colleges are particularly keen to make available additional units in foreign languages and personal skills to all students. Others have associated opportunities to obtain a First Aid Certificate with the GNVQs in Health and Social Care, units from the NVQs in Business Administration with the GNVQs in Business, and Coaching Awards with the GNVQs in Leisure and Tourism.

Colleges have also found it useful to consider the circumstances under which students will be encouraged to take additional studies.

Many colleges in phase one of GNVQ implementation offered A levels as an additional study option to Advanced GNVQ students. This may be particularly attractive to students who wish to proceed onto higher education but it is advisable to consider whether the addition of an A-level broadens the student's programme. Some colleges actively discourage students from adding an A level to a GNVQ if the A level is in the same subject as the GNVQ. Other colleges point out that adding an A level, with a very different set of assessment requirements, to an Advanced GNVQ can be demanding for the student.

Whatever the reasons for adding an A level to a GNVQ programme it is evident that the ease with which an A level complements an Advanced GNVQ varies according to the vocational sector.

One college reported that offering an A level in Business alongside the Advanced GNVQ Business was possible and some overlap of content was discernable. However the college was not convinced that the combination either broadened or focused the programme very much. Conversely the college reported that the Advanced GNVQ in Art and Design could be focused on two-dimensional studies by adding an A level in Art and on three-dimensional studies by adding an A level in Design and Technology.

If a significant overlap between the content of the A level and the GNVQ can be identified the demand on the student is reduced, and so colleges are beginning to explore the possibility of developing units or modules of learning which might underpin two or more qualifications. The possibility of harmonising units is greater when modular A levels are offered alongside GNVQs, although at present, few appropriate modular A levels exist.

Core skills

The core skill units used with GNVQs are specified more explicitly than other sets of core skills, are available at five levels and demand detailed assessment. They can be used with any qualification (although must be used with GNVQs) and have some correlation with National Curriculum achievement and, in turn, GCSE achievement. For all these reasons it is likely that the systems in place in colleges for pre-GNVQ core skill delivery and assessment will need revision in order to cope with the introduction of the new core skills associated with GNVQs. Some colleges have appointed a cross-college core skills co-ordinator with responsibility for co-ordinating the introduction of core skills into the college curriculum.

Because of the importance of core skills to GNVQs it will always be necessary to include core skill staff in the planning of GNVQ programmes.

Colleges have discovered that there are a number of issues which require some whole-college policy on core skills including:

- whether the college will offer students access to the three mandatory core skills only, or all the core skills and whether the college will offer students access to core skills at levels beyond that required for the award of the qualification;
- delivery and assessment issues including integration issues;
- resource issues including the human resource allocation issue of who teaches the core skills;
- the possibility of providing core skill support sessions common to students on all GNVQ programmes;
- the use of core skills outside GNVQs.

Many colleges, with experience of GNVQs, have commented on the advantages of developing the core skills in working with others and improving own learning even though they are not required for a GNVQ.

> *Colleges which had consulted with employers on the new qualifications found that employers tended to value problem solving and personal skills as highly as communication skills. Another powerful argument came from the college which argued that the optional core skills could have a vital part to play in developing action planning systems. Student-centred action planning, review and recording processes are possible only if diagnosis and target setting take place and learning is planned and reviewed. If the student is to be central to these activities, the skills of self analysis, self management and problem solving need to be developed. These are the optional core skills and can be developed as the student is given greater autonomy.*

The encouragement of core skill achievement beyond that required for the award of the GNVQ has been highlighted by some colleges as a means of adding value to the GNVQ programme.

Although core skill development and assessment should be integrated as far as possible within the vocational activities carried out by the student, colleges have discovered that it is sometimes necessary to deviate from this aim.

> *Colleges report that the opportunities for core skill development and assessment vary from GNVQ to GNVQ and colleges have had to take note of this centrally. Colleges also report that the typical Intermediate GNVQ students will need more help with core skills than the typical GNVQ Advanced student.*

In some vocational sectors it can be difficult to construct vocational activities which offer opportunities for the **development** of some core skill elements. This is reported to be

especially so of Application of Number and Information Technology. In other cases, students might experience repeated difficulties with an aspect of a core skill. In such cases colleges may find it necessary to offer opportunities for core skill development outside a vocational context.

There may also be some aspects of core skill **assessment** which are not easy to integrate into the vocational context. In this case colleges have found it useful to consider other, and different, contexts. For example, a student's non-college activities might provide a vocational context for core skill assessment as might work placements.

The requirement that all students develop their skills in Information Technology for GNVQs places a great demand on **IT resources**. Colleges report that it is well worth considering an audit of the college's hardware and software resources against the requirements of the IT units and likely student needs.

Although many colleges' first contact with the core skills will be through the implementation of GNVQs, the core skills required for GNVQs can be used with other qualification and programmes.

> *One college enthusiastically welcomed GNVQs because of the prominence given to core skills and used their introduction to embed core skills in all qualifications offered on a full-time basis by the college to students aged 16-19. A college core-skill policy was developed and core skills were developed and assessed through A-level and NVQ programmes as well as GNVQ programmes. The adoption of core skills complemented the college's work on TVE and entitlement and, by ensuring some common components, meant that transfer between programmes was easier for some students.*

Colleges should note that the development and assessment of core skills in programmes leading to NVQs, as a means of broadening them, seems to be welcomed by both students and employers.

Assessment issues

The assessment and grading systems associated with GNVQs differ in important respects from the systems associated with other qualifications. Although some staff will have experience of delivering and assessing competence and/or core skills, colleges should not assume that knowledge of the systems and approaches developed for BTEC qualifications or NVQs are adequate for GNVQs. The GNVQ assessment and grading system is unique, the specifications of core skills will be new to most staff and the absence of requirements on learning programme design may be new to many staff. At the same time the rapid introduction of GNVQs into the college curriculum will mean that most staff will have to become conversant with GNVQs fairly quickly.

A whole-college GNVQ information and awareness-raising strategy will reap benefits and colleges should review, update and develop their assessment policies as GNVQs are introduced.

Close centre liaison with awarding body(ies) over assessment and verification matters is essential. Colleges have a role in the internal quality assurance systems for GNVQs and will need to make arrangements for internal verification systems and ensure that internal verifiers are able to meet, periodically, with assessors to ensure some consistency of internal assessment.

A number of colleges have found it useful to nominate a senior member of staff, usually a GNVQ internal verifier, as GNVQ assessment co-ordinator. This person will take responsibility for handling all assessment and verification issues and play a role on advising and training staff in assessment.

A key task will be to ensure that all GNVQ staff understand the GNVQ assessment requirements and share an understanding on how performance criteria, range statements and evidence requirements should be interpreted. As one college put it:

We realised that we needed to spend some time meeting as a team to familiarise ourselves with the GNVQ specifications and the assessment systems and to agree which activities would be assessed and which methods we would use. It was very useful to have some sessions led by the internal verifier and we checked our conclusions with the external verifier when she came in. We no longer have a course team — these days we are the GNVQ assessment team as well as the GNVQ programme team.

Another college commented:

Reaching agreement on what the standard of the qualification was took some time. We found it much easier to appreciate the standard after studying the test specifications, seeing the tests and having students' work verified as reaching the standard, than we did after only looking at the unit specifications. Especially at Intermediate level, we did not find it very helpful to try and understand the standard of the GNVQ by referring to other qualifications.

NCVQ and the awarding bodies intend that eventually all assessors and verifiers should be trained to TDLB standards and colleges should begin to set up systems for this training. However, colleges report that if the quality of assessment is to be assured, the acquisition of TDLB units should be seen as the beginning of a process of training and followed up by college-devised training.

Colleges in the first year of GNVQs found that GNVQ assessment takes more teacher time than 'old style' qualifications. Also, although colleges have not reported a demand for unexpected resources, they have said that there is a need to identify secure storage space for test papers (over and above that which might exist for GCSE and A-level examinations), for increased **reprographic facilities** and for decisions to be made about the **storage of portfolios** which will need to be maintained throughout the student's programme since final grades can only be given when the student has completed all the units satisfactorily.

External testing for GNVQs is 'on demand', subject to availability, but colleges may wish to determine when, and in what circumstances, students will be entered for external tests. The availability of the external tests informs decisions about curriculum models if only because the patterning of external testing tends to undermine the fully integrated approach in favour of unit-by-unit delivery. Colleges also need to bear in mind that some students will need to sit some tests more than once before the unit can be awarded and that students may have to be prepared for the *form* of the external tests. In responding to the implications of students wanting to resit external tests, colleges should bear in mind that the results of the tests should be with colleges within 30 days of the student sitting the test.

Administrative systems appropriate for managing the registration of students, test entries and the management of the externally set tests are needed and some colleges have reported that the demands on the college administration system have increased significantly with the introduction of GNVQs. Colleges report that some GNVQ testing opportunities have clashed with A-level and GCSE examination dates. This is particularly pertinent to students who choose GCSEs or A levels as additional studies. Colleges also report that where part-time, employed students and full-time students need access to external testing it may be necessary to ask full-time students to attend external testing in the evening so that no student is discriminated against but security is maintained. Colleges have also had to allocate space and invigilators to GNVQ testing.

Awarding bodies recommend that GNVQ centres establish some formal internal appeals procedures. If this advice is to be taken, it will need some central organisation and the establishment of equitable and valid systems. Since all awarding bodies and NCVQ insist that access to assessment and its application be free from any barriers, colleges should also be very sensitive to the needs of any student who would be discriminated against by the form of any part of the GNVQ assessment system and report any case to the awarding body accordingly.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE INTRODUCTION OF GNVQS

The introduction of any new qualification requires monitoring and evaluation. Colleges involved in the first phase of GNVQ introduction reported that monitoring and evaluation were needed to compare different approaches to GNVQ programme design; to ensure that prototype systems were working as intended and to review decisions taken by the college.

Colleges have suggested that programmes should be evaluated against criteria set by:

- local objectives;
- recruitment and participation rates;
- notions of 'value added';
- retention and achievement rates;
- progression rates and destinations.

These monitoring and evaluative activities will involve colleges in collecting data and perceptions from students, programme team members, college managers and those outside the college including external verifiers. Colleges may also collect intelligence and data from university admissions staff and employers, schools and parents which may contribute to the evaluation process. In order to make maximum use of the information collected, colleges need to decide in advance what data will be collected, how it will be used and how it will be used and fed back to those who need it, including those responsible for policy, planning and management.

Colleges should also remember that the national evaluation of the development of GNVQs is not over and that they have a key role in feeding evaluative information to awarding bodies, NCVQ and others. This will help these bodies and agencies in reviewing GNVQ and core skill specifications, assessment and grading systems and the suitability of the GNVQs for a variety of student groups and purposes.

Colleges also point out that the development and introduction of GNVQs should be seen as part of the general development of the post-16 sector. Developments at Key Stage 4 of the National Curriculum and with A levels, especially modular A levels, will affect the use of GNVQs and their introduction into colleges. Colleges should make sure that their planning processes are informed by developments in these areas as well as developments with GNVQs.

A SUMMARY CHECKLIST FOR INTRODUCING GNVQS

Purposes

Have any local objectives for GNVQs been identified?
Have student target groups for GNVQs been identified?
Will the introduction of GNVQs lead to an improved curriculum offer?

Qualification Replacement

Which GNVQs will be introduced?
Will the college be involved in piloting GNVQs?
Which qualifications will GNVQs replace?
Will the college introduce Foundation GNVQs?
Has the introduction of GNVQs been synchronised with the introduction or modification of other qualifications?
How will the college deal with the replacement of specialist vocational qualifications with GNVQs?
Is there a timetable for the introduction of GNVQs?
Has an Awarding Body been selected and centre approval obtained?

Co-ordination and Programme Team Development

Has a GNVQ Co-ordinator been appointed?
Has a GNVQ Assessment Co-ordinator been appointed?
Has a GNVQ Co-ordinating Group been established?
Have programme or course teams been reviewed for GNVQs?
Are staff sufficiently knowledgeable of the industry and do systems exist to keep them updated?
Has a staff development programme on GNVQs for all staff been organised?
Have appropriate cross-college resources been identified, e.g. reprographics?

Marketing and External Liaison

Has a GNVQ marketing strategy been developed?
Has the local TEC been contacted about GNVQs?
Have schools been informed of GNVQs — and opportunities for schools-college partnerships developed?
Have universities been contacted about GNVQs and progression agreements developed?
Do local employers know about GNVQs?

Selection and Induction

Have selection criteria been identified for GNVQs?
Have arrangement been made for diagnostic testing?
Have GNVQ induction programmes been developed?
Have common components of induction programme been identified as well as GNVQ programme specific components?

Programme Design

Has the college come to some agreement on the range of programme models to be used with GNVQs?
Can programme models accommodate external tests and the possibility of resits?
Have timetables for GNVQs been created which take account of FEFC funding decisions and which will meet the needs of students?
Has the college made decisions about additional studies including the identification of common additions to all programmes and GNVQs?
Have teaching units common to more than one GNVQ been identified?
Will the college offer a "part-time" route to GNVQs?
Have any decisions been made about work experience?

Core Skills

Has the college made any decisions on student access to the optional core skills or core skill levels above those required for the qualification?
Will core skill support be available to students who need it?
Are core skill specialist teachers available as required?
Are adequate resources available for core skill delivery and assessment?
Have opportunities for offering core skill support across the GNVQ curriculum been identified?
Will core skills be offered in programmes other than GNVQ programmes?
Has a core skills co-ordinator been appointed?

Assessment

Has the college's assessment policy been updated and amended for GNVQs?
Will assessment practices meet equal opportunity requirements?
Have programme teams and assessors come to agreement on interpretations of the GNVQ assessment specifications?
Have internal verification systems been established?
Have arrangements been made for the training of assessors and verifiers?
Have administrative systems been established to deal with external testing?
Have appropriate resources been allocated for assessment and grading systems including storage for tests and portfolios?

Review and Evaluation

Has someone been given responsibility for co-ordinating review and evaluation arrangements?
Have opportunities for programme review and evaluation been created?
Have clear criteria for review and evaluation been identified?
Have systems for the collection of data and perceptions been established?
How will national developments inform review and evaluation systems?
How will review and evaluation information be used?

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